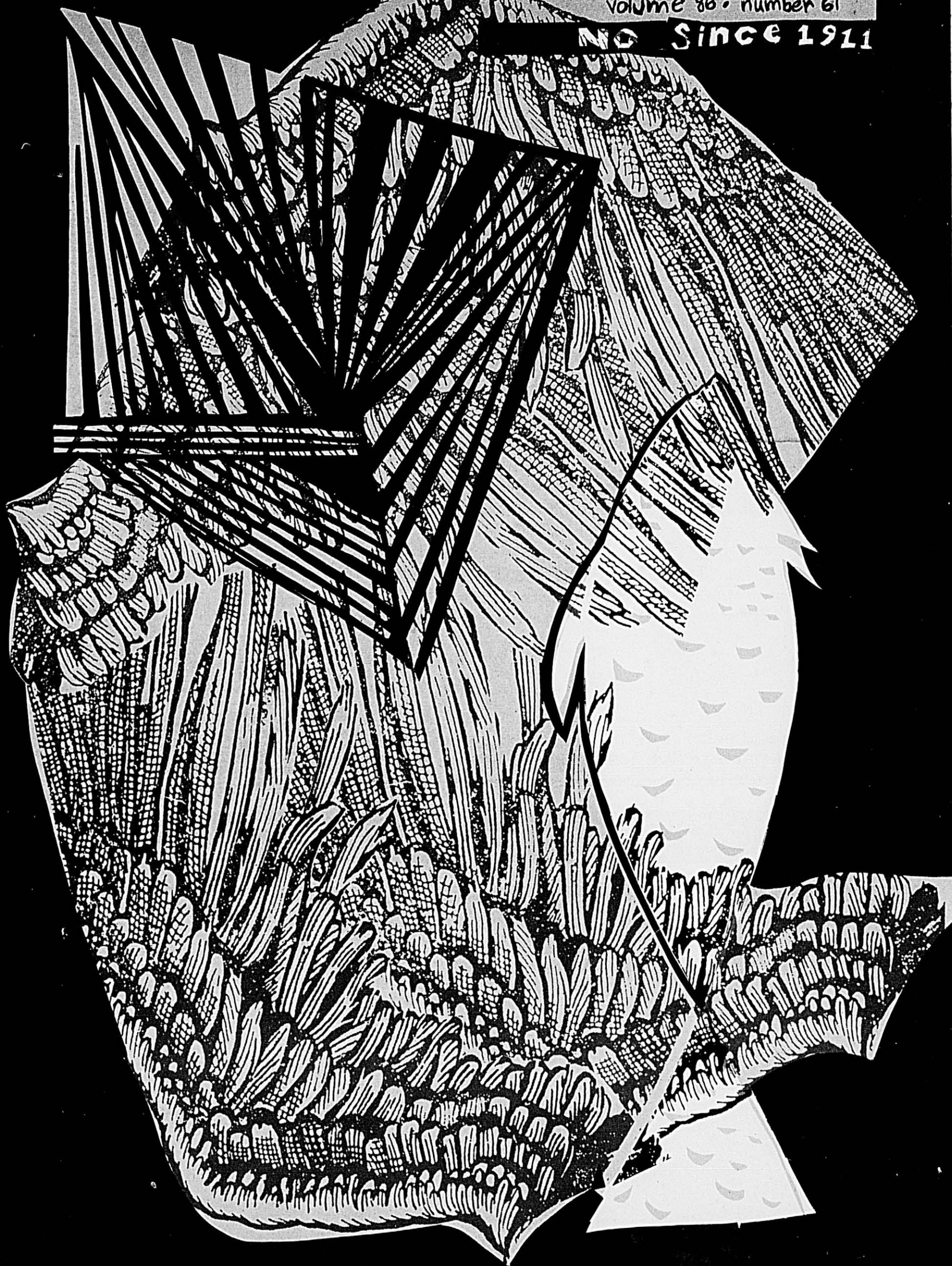


DAILY culture

volume 86 • number 61

NO Since 1911

13-19



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Session 1: *"Pathways and Barriers for Immigrant Mental Health Care."*
Dr. Laurence Kirmayer, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University.

Session 2: Issues in Migration Health.
(two presentations)
"New Directions: A Governmental Perspective."
Dr. Ronald St. John, Special Advisor to Director General, Laboratory Centre for Disease Control, Health Canada.

"Immigration and Medical Screening: The Case of TB."
Dr. Richard Menzies, Director, Respiratory Epidemiology Unit, Joint Departments of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and of Occupational Health, McGill.

For information call 398-1273, fax 398-7336 or email Metrop@leacock.lan.mcgill.ca

Note: the presentations will be mainly in English, the questions and answers in both English and French.

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letters

Tribute to a sick friend

To the Daily,

This concerns a rather serious issue that is not very pertinent to your average McGill student. However, this kind of experience will prey upon many a student much later in life. Ian Andes, avid student at McGill, has become suddenly ill to the dismay of all his friends and family. In a medical sense, Ian's future condition is less than stable.

All Ian's friends wish him the Luck of the Irish and a quick recovery as he enters surgery on Friday. For all concerned, any best wishes or cards can be given to Ian's family, who will be at Gert's on Friday with Ian's friends in a meeting of support.

Chris Campbell
U2 Management

Health Plan: A Disgrace

To the Daily,

There are countless examples of managerial incompetence in the world, but at McGill, the one which undoubtedly tops the list is the SSMU Health Plan. The plan changed in January without prior warning (unless you count the unexplained sentence in the brochure mailed out in January: "Prescription drug benefits may be claimed on a 'pay-direct' basis at any pharmacy in Québec by using your pay-direct certificate."), and we still do not know when we will be able to obtain the up-front discounts at pharmacies. Thus, more than two months into the semester, the insurance plan which we pay for is still not providing us with one of its most essential services.

Three parties must share the blame for this mess. Liberty Health Insurance is obviously disorganized, since three phone calls to their office on Friday, March 7 led to three different answers as to whether the pay-direct certificates had been mailed to the Québec Student Health Alliance. As for the Québec Student Health Alliance, it has not remained sufficiently informed about the Health Insurance's behaviour, since until I phoned them on Friday, they believed that the certificates were already on the way to their office. Finally, SSMU must take responsibility for having initiated this unprofessional health insurance plan.

Had I been informed by the administrators of the McGill Health Insurance plan that I would have to pay for all of my medications up-front for most of the semester and that I would have to waste time trying to track down the elusive pay-direct certificates, I would definitely have opted out of the plan. I only hope that SSMU has the intelligence and decency to end the contract on behalf of students as quickly as possible. Surely, we can obtain better service elsewhere.

Dominique Nourvet
U3 Economics

"Spoon-feeding" the 'right' choices?

To the Daily,

I am writing to express my disappointment with the Management Undergraduate Societies' (MUS) decision to publish an official "endorsement list" of SSMU election candidates. The poster reads, "The MUS recommends that you vote for the following people if you have not fully informed yourself on your own: President, Derek Prohar; VP Finance, Duncan Reid; VP Internal, Sarvesh Srivastava; VP External, Lisa Phipps; VP University Affairs, Elisabeth Gomery; Board of Governors, Michelle Legault."

Upon discovering copies of this list posted on the walls of the Bronfman cafeteria, I was shocked at the lack of respect for democracy inherent in such a publication. Since when does an 11 member council (of which only five voted to endorse) have the right to impose their opinions on 1,500 students? And the last time I checked, encouraging uninformed students to vote by spoon-feeding them the "right" choices is not the way a fair election is conducted. The MUS would better serve their constituents by encouraging them to take more interest in what goes on outside of the Bronfman walls.

It also strikes me as odd that incoming council-elects are not allowed to vote in the endorsement selection, considering it is they, and not the outgoing council, who will have to deal with the future SSMU executives. In addition, what becomes of the relationship between the MUS and a newly elected council member who was *not* endorsed? No other undergraduate society at McGill publicly endorses candidates in such a manner, and perhaps the MUS should follow suit. And one last thing—if you're going to endorse candidates, at least have the courtesy to spell their names right!

Marnie Rabinovitch
U2 Management

Where did all the Dailys go?

To the Daily,

Have any of you noticed lately that several, maybe hundreds, of the most recent McGill Daily Women's Issue have gone missing? What this act demonstrates to me is the difference between having an opinion and being a coward.

Note that there is nothing wrong with having an opinion. Opinions, in my opinion, are what make this world (and, dare I say, this university) an interesting place to be. I do not expect, when I walk into a classroom, that I will agree with everything everyone has to say. I do, however, expect that people will be somewhat open and honest and willing to enter into a debate. I agree to listen to other people's opinion, they agree (most of the time) to stick around and listen to mine. Fine. But darlings, please, if you have an opinion you feel you need to express, then do so. *Do not*, I repeat *do not*, counter an opinion you don't agree with by simply ELIMINATING the source. It's rude. It's nasty. It's a HUGE waste and it's cowardly.

Mariko Tamaki
U3 English

Attention "McGill Engineers"

The Daily wants to print your letter as soon as possible, but it is too long! Please come down and shorten it. All letters to the editor must be 300 words or less.

hyde park

International Women's Week at McGill University revealed deplorable conditions which young women students contend with daily; these conditions have been compared to a zoo.

McGill University attracts brilliant international and Canadian professors, doctors, scientists and students; their research in science and medicine is acclaimed worldwide.

The prestigious status the University enjoys would be improved if human rights and specifically women's rights and safety issues were addressed immediately. Administration, alumni, parents and chaplaincy teams need to listen to the concerns of women students. They have the responsibility to assure female students that their problems concerning human rights and safety issues are a top priority and will be dealt with appropriately and quickly.

Students need to be encouraged to report all rapes they encounter so that appropriate and immediate action can be taken against perpetrators who prey on women, even to the extreme measure of expelling them from the University.

Young women are stalked, inappropriately touched and subjected to lewd sexual remarks.

Also, women's bathrooms are problematic: peeping Toms and men walking in at inappropriate times create fear. I am a senior, mother and grandmother, and I had the experience in the Shatner Building of walking out of a bathroom on Wednesday, March 5th at 2 p.m. after a women's discussion. A man carrying one roll of toilet paper was walking into the women's bathroom. He had no janitorial uniform or identifiable badge. It could easily happen at 11 p.m. that a stalker or rapist might walk in. Furthermore, house-keeping staff need to designate certain hours in the day with an appropriate sign for cleaning women's bathrooms and replenishing supplies as they do in other universities and colleges. Signs are posted for women to enter bathrooms in pairs. Is this the best that can be done to safeguard against undesirable characters?

Safer conditions needed at McGill

Young women who attend University social functions need the assurance that their presence is not to be interpreted as an invitation for unwanted sexual advances and rape. Fear that their drinks may be laced with drugs to make them more compliant need to be addressed.

I was impressed by the young men who

attended discussions on women's issues on safety. Their open support for women's search for equality and safety measures is commendable. They are the visionaries who have the sensitivity to know that equality, respect and lack of fear are the basis for improved male-female relationships leading to better communication and understanding. Empowering women to achieve their goals in today's society assures more wholesome partnerships in business and personal relationships.

Alumni members of McGill need to give their full support to assist their daughters, female friends and women from other countries studying at McGill to continue their studies without fear. Men can do only so much to improve women's lives; however, women must be encouraged to speak out against all injustices towards women. Women empowering women to achieve their highest potential in a safe environment is a goal to which we should strive.

— Elizabeth Kachur

The McGill Daily Culture

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March 13 – 19, 1997

McGill Daily Culture

3



FOURTH ANNUAL MCGILL PHARMACOLOGY RESEARCH DAY

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4:00 p.m. - Keynote Address by:

Dr. Robert S. Hodges, University of Alberta, Network Leader, Protein Engineering Network of Centres of Excellence (PENEC) "Redesigning gramicidins for use as peptide antibiotics: structure-function relationships"

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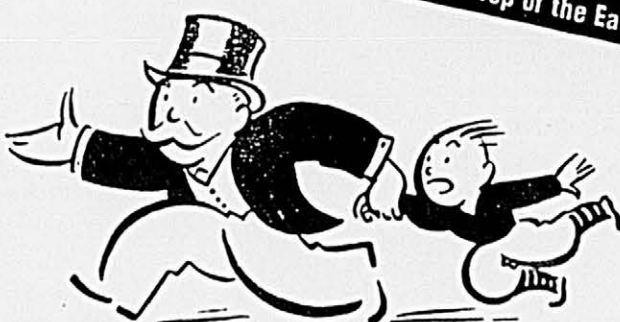
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The sins of Pop David Critique of a starving artist

by Mullein Buss

From Rembrandt to Jackson Pollack, everybody loves a starving artist: the challenge to the status quo, the refusal to be accountable, the aesthetic guerrilla tactics—it's the stuff of legends. Unfortunately, the art is usually the stuff of obscurity, and caught in this contradiction Pop David has become a health risk to himself, consigned to life in a unrewarding limbo, just waiting for something to catch. This is what he's doing there:

First off, he has assembled a bucketful of compositions and, with album launching hype of negligible impact, has pretty much just tossed *Bottom Of The Barrel* (his thirteenth since 1980) in the general direction of the Montréal audience. It is a musical pastiche in the fine art sense, where the tunes which might normally be the final product are

themselves used as the material for a different type of arrangement, a meta-arrangement. Emerging as a conventional but discordant bête-noire collection of sounds, the composition is persistently climaxing and flaunting its moody passages. Then it will shrilly execute a total structure transition from, say, a goofy G-funk piece to a neo-classical violin-led pattern, or something like that.

These compositional gymnastics make me suspicious, and I don't take kindly to being intellectually belittled by a shaggy garage production posing silly questions: 'How should a song sound?' it asks, 'What is beauty in music,' or 'Why are you an aesthetic chauvinist?' This is not an audience friendly attitude.

True, he says, "The audience is my boss," but to all appearances,

this factor in the musical equation has remained solely on an abstract level for David, perhaps as another part of the artist lore to which he appears to subscribe. Also included in this package are statements such as, "I didn't choose music, music chose me," and "The world will catch up to what I'm doing." These clichés would be meaningless props if they weren't 1) spoken with obvious authentic conviction and 2) backed up by 17 years of "walking the walk."

Worst of all of Pop David's sins is having the audacity to speak of the project as "part of a stage of evolution" — a work-in-progress, stubbornly avoiding the obvious question: Who would want to listen to 'an evolution' when it's simple, bright music which is legal tender to the general public?

David succinctly describes his position in the market: "There are a hundred people who like Pop David."

He has not closed the gap between the creative instinct and the survival instinct; they're working at cross purposes. David has this fatal attraction to rock and composition and, seeking to master both, pursues his own personal Romeo and Juliet tragedy, which he describes as "Symphonic Groove Rock." There is the industry and then there is the great silent mass of everything else in the world of music. Pop David, for better or worse, is part of the latter.

Furthermore, despite total commitment, he hasn't learned anything in 17 years of production. Unless you count any pre-cognitive refinements of the punk emetic technique and the engorgement of a vastly eclectic musical vocabulary, there's been no visible refinement — it's still raw.

The situation is obviously hopeless. It's apparent that the fringe is tired of the impossible job of breaking in, and if it weren't fiercely populated by the condemned, it would drop forever and forgotten into obscurity. But the music still has unlimited potential.

Bottom of the Barrel is available on cassette at Cheap Thrills and L'Oblique.

EUROPE

For Students

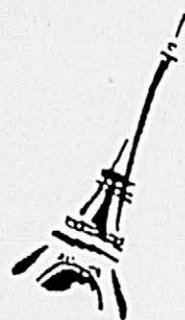
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happenings

Big news on Montréal's environment

Americana '97, Wednesday and Thursday, March 19

By next Wednesday, we should know just how polluted Montréal is, and if any of its residents are at risk. Next Wednesday and Thursday, the Montréal Convention Center holds Americana '97, an environmental technologies trade show sponsored by the Québec Environmental Technology Association and the Québec Environmental Services Association. Included are nearly 6,000 delegates representing twenty-six countries delivering speeches covering every possible aspect of environmental technology ranging from hazardous waste disposal to air pollution control. Although this conference is not open to the general public, a simplified summary report will be released.

This report just might be worth paying attention to as it will outline the safety of Montréal drink-

ing water, air, and current environmental clean-up programs. There will be presentations on smog in the city as well as on agricultural technologies for depolluting our air. New information generated through the checking of Montréal water for the same water-borne microorganism that killed 100 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1994 will be released. There will also be a discussion on used tire management in Québec as well as talks on programs aimed at clearing the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes region of water pollution. (So far, 90% of this pollution has been cleared through aqua-cleaning and prevention). Of more global concern, representatives from Venezuela, Brazil, and Canada will analyze what has been accomplished in each country since their 1986 signing of the Montreal Ozone Treaty. The treaty

was signed with the intent of phasing out ozone destroying chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) from aerosol sprays.

Americana '97 will allow industries to analyze environmental problems and evaluate which approaches to solve them have been most effective. It is also an opportunity to share technologies such as DuPont Canada's alternative to the Ozone-destroying Freon gas that is currently used in refrigerators and air conditioners. The sponsors of Americana '97 hope that representatives of Canadian firms will form partnerships with those from South and Central America to combine forces to help the environment.

— Lili Ibara

A dose of New York drag comes to Montréal

Home Made Pride, Friday, March 14

Ever since the voguing queens in Harlem U.S.A. got their schtick bitten off by culture vultures Malcolm McLaren and Madonna, certain key words and concepts have become regular fare in drag performances far and wide. Such words as "legendary", "shade" and even "house" have displaced, and all but put into retirement, classic drag jargon of the Barbra Streisand-Bette Midler variety. Just a few examples: a group of drag queens regularly performing together now thinks of itself as a "house," not a "chorus".

Good drag, the kind that surpasses all other attempts at imitation, is popularly understood as "real," not "realistic" (as in, "Check her out; she is real!"). Queens are more likely to describe themselves as being "fierce," not "bitchy." And when a drag queen beholds you disap-

provingly, she "throws shade at you, honey" instead of simply "giving you attitude," which is what she is likely to have been doing a decade ago.

The thing that bears noting about this shift in terminology is that its origins have been successfully occulted in the interests of popularizing drag as mainstream entertainment. The fact is, the special blend of life and play that led to all this amusing pretense continues to ruffle its feathers deep in Harlem, where the best of its practitioners, the most real, the fully fierce, earn for themselves the title of "legendary."

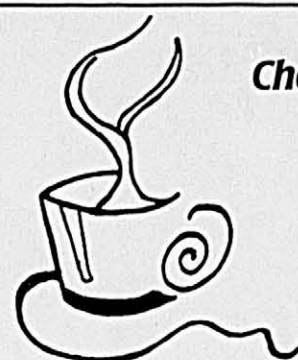
Seeing as most of us can't just pick up and go to New York for a look-see at the people behind the words, a magnificent troupe of local drag performers will be hosting their own extravaganza at Club Home on Friday, March 14. The event, dubbed "HomeMade

Pride", is the latest instalment for the House of Pride, a bevy of beautiful beauties who work hard at taking drag to another level. The House incorporates various genres into their shows: singing, dancing, drama, and of course a significant dose of humour; Friday night's production is set to begin with a "Dragulicious Fashion Shock."

Come sample from the glitz and glamour served up by hostesses with names like Gartina J., Marta Marta and Kiet. For all of you in the know, make yourselves at home; for the uninitiated, make it a legendary night not to be forgotten.

— Nicholas Boston

To find the House of Pride, head Home: 1450 St. Catherine. Doors open at 10pm, with Dj Tony Desypris spinning 'till 3 am.



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JOHNNY DEPP IN DEAD MAN

by Julien Lapointe

The Fall of Indie Film



SOLODNZ

Why American Independent Films are Less than Meets the Eye

film

The American independent film, or "indie," has long been celebrated as an artistic alternative to studio productions. Low-budget, innovative films from creative *auteurs* are screened every year at the Sundance Film Festival. A selected fraction find distributors, eventually finding release and praise in the pages of indie film mags such as *Filmmaker*, *Movie Maker* or *Film Threat*. The current consensus in the mainstream press, such as the *New York Times* or *Entertainment Weekly*, is that indie film is alive and well. So much for the business side; aesthetically, American independent film is something else.

Independent film has come to represent an industry, its so-called artistry a selling point for box-office dollars. Most commercially released independent films hold a smug disregard for any traditional criteria such as drama, characterizations or plotline. Yet they rarely, on the other hand, represent a significantly innovative exploration of the film medium. With varying degrees of success, the previous generation of independent directors such as David Lynch, the Coens or Jim Jarmusch, admittedly do succeed in offering an intriguing if not unpretentious look at the medium. But I doubt that a similar case could be made for Quentin Tarantino, whose directing has a flashy, glib sensationalism which demonstrates a greater interest in pleasing the audience than in truly engaging them in the art of the medium.

Cinema, in a way comparable to theatre, integrates diverse elements (such as writing, acting or music) into a unified whole. Although there is no single quality which defines a movie, film enthusiasts tend to isolate the appeal of *mise en scène*, or directorial style. I suspect much of the banality of contemporary indie film can be attributed to the conventions established by the Coens, or Lynch, or Jarmusch. For them (and their admirers), "innovative" means constructing clever little sequences, with a fancy camera movement or two, the occasional odd angle, and possibly some fancy sound effects.

Still, the indie auteurs, having emerged 10 years ago, aren't without integrity: they avoid Hollywood, not as an affectation, but because they refuse to compromise their talents with the studios' norm. The indie youth of today, however, have their aesthetic interests determined by the commercial interests of the film industry. Film is, and has always been, an art form whose existence lies in the hands of businesspeople who manage it for financial profit. Indie producers boast of their respect for the art of film, just as indie enthusiasts generally fancy themselves as belonging to some special elite. But essentially this particular brand of filmmaking is just as bound by its own set of conventions, and by various tricks for "entertaining" its audience.

Faulty aesthetics

Various recent independent films provide a startling insight into the supposed art of this industry. They're not all bad, but even the better works suffer from their irritable need to shock, or, at least, to be original. Pictures like *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, *Heavy* and *Manny and Lo* only sporadically transgress the glossy aesthetic framework within which they were produced. *Dollhouse*, for example, starts as an astute parody of life in the suburbs; it wouldn't be of much interest were it not for the fact that, thankfully, writer-director Todd Solondz moved beyond the overly familiar terrain of slick comedy to the more challenging thematic structure of tragicomedy and, most notably,

drama. But there's reason to suspect its success at Sundance was based on its comedic vein, considering most of the release hype (such as the poster) exploited this factor.

On the other side of the balance are a pair of fiascos: *2 Days in the Valley* and *Freeway*. They're self-servingly imitative of certain recent popular trends in film, which may very well be their only point of interest as far as analysis is concerned. Most startling is the total absence of any social or political insight despite their subject matter and, in the case of *Freeway*, their purported intentions.

What is most off-putting about a film like *Freeway* is the strong condescension it has for its characters, and consequently for America's lower class. The story is centered on a runaway teenage girl who gets mixed up in murder, prostitution and an attempted rape. It's also a comedy. The director crudely makes a mockery of the young girl's problems, and ignores their seriousness by tacking on a happy end.

The appeal of most indie films like *Freeway* is their implausibility. Audiences will laugh away at a dramatic situation in the same manner people find joy at a Hollywood production. The directors, preferring not to communicate any significant moral or social comment, adopt an attitude of thoughtless negativity to their whole film. *2 Days* and *Freeway* develop characters and dramatic contexts where such discourses are appropriate and, one could argue, essential to the intelligence and feeling of the work. Instead the films opt for a dubious blend of caricature and attitudinizing. What's so irritating is that this gratuitous subversion, devoid of purpose or meaning, which masquerades as art. But there's no critical intelligence which is at work here, only a systematic parody of conventions done for shallow provocation.

Overlooked art

The main problem with each of these films

is their failure (to various degrees) to fully express the sensibility of a personal, artistic view. In the case of the better films, the directors, though talented, only infrequently allow form to freely flow from content. Instead, they impose a too-cleanly devised and categorical framework on their work; ironically, they restrain their creativity, because, I suspect, their concern for finding a distributor and reaching an audience.

These concerns aren't without justification, given the commercial nature of the film industry. A film like the largely unknown *Desolation Angels* received an absurdly limited theatrical run, was ignored by most reviewers, and displeased audiences at the Toronto Film Festival. A searing drama about a rape in the lower-class Irish milieu of New York, it had no obvious selling point. In *The Village Voice*, Amy Taubin (one of the work's few reviewers) made a joke that *Desolation Angels* offered a slightly more disturbing view of its ethnic milieu than another American-Irish picture, *The Brothers McMullen*. In view of each film's financial success, her remarks turned out to be disconcertingly prescient.

I wouldn't say that American independent films, as they exist, are artistic. At best, the better pictures have artistic potential, a flash of talent yet to be crushed by the needs of commerce. Reviewers, for the most part, shy away from confronting any of the pervading issues concerning independent film. Distributors embrace standards of judgment far removed from the innovative complexities of film.

Nonetheless, it would be dishonest to deny the existence of talent in the independent film world. The most disappointing truth may be that, among the directors, there is fresh talent, all willing to obey the criteria of the reigning consensus formed by producers, public and mainstream reviewers alike. But why should artists care for such criteria?



TARANTINO



FROM WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE

The CIA/Jackson Pollock conspiracy, the Munsch theft and Burt Bacharach

by Nicholas Boston

What is the International Festival of Films on Art?

The introduction of photography to the realm of visual culture at the end of the nineteenth century spelled all sorts of changes for painting in particular, and representational art in general. Painting could no longer render itself as the "truest" medium, and it therefore gave up trying to do so.

What followed was the radical shift towards conceptual art and eventually to an art that not only challenged photography, but reacted to it, communicated with it, became it. Photographs and their moving versions, film and video, are today taken to be neither art nor science. As a medium, they occupy an indeterminate space lying somewhere between record-making and self-expression.

What could possibly be more complicated, then, than trying to make a strict delineation between film as a non-art responsible for recording the activities of the other arts, and film as an artistic enterprise? Would not a film about art itself become art? And wouldn't art reject the judgmental scrutiny of a self-styled, disinterested camera lens?

These questions seem to linger at the base of Montréal's 15th International Festival of Films on Art, running from March 11 to the 16. The festival, the only one of its kind in the Americas, gathers together 160 films and videos organized under the principle of looking at, seeing through, art. Attempting, as it does, to come to some understanding both of the interrogative capacities of the camera, and of the intimate details of the psychology

of individual artists, the Festival of Films on Art includes a fair smattering of documentary-style accounts of the lives of various artistic personalities. Some of the figures represented are Pasolini, Philip Glass, Rainer Maria Rilke, André Malraux and, rather amusingly, Burt Bacharach.

Most promising for the spectator, however, are those films which actually do something with the image of the artist, which intervene on romantic notions and high brow expectations of the artistic process. Among some of the more intriguing selections are those are those films which do not attempt a self-conscious reflection on the meaning of art. *The Theft of the Century*, for instance, recounts the circumstances surrounding the theft of the painting, "The Scream," by Edvard Munch. The British production *Joshua Compston* looks at the life of a talented young curator who died at the age of 25.

Another British production, *Hidden Hands Art and the CIA*, exposes the fact that in the 1950s, the CIA pumped funds into promoting the work of such artists as Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline. The big question is, of course, why? Commentaries in this film come equally from art critics and artists' colleagues, as from former CIA giants instrumental in the promotion campaign. What this film calls into question is the tendency to assume that all successful artists are geniuses, when often a lot going on behind the scenes has contributed to their success.

The festival's line-up does not entirely evade stock narratives that stand to suggest what the inner motivations of the artist might

be, and what the perceived artistic lifestyle is all about. There are, for example, films that deliberately make the age-old, Van Gogh-esque connection between art and madness. *Eight Point Star* looks at the work of a Brazilian animator who has been resident in a psychiatric institution for the past 50 years. Similarly, in *Les Couleurs du Silence*, a sustained look is offered at a colony of artists in Austria, all of whom are diagnosed schizophrenics.

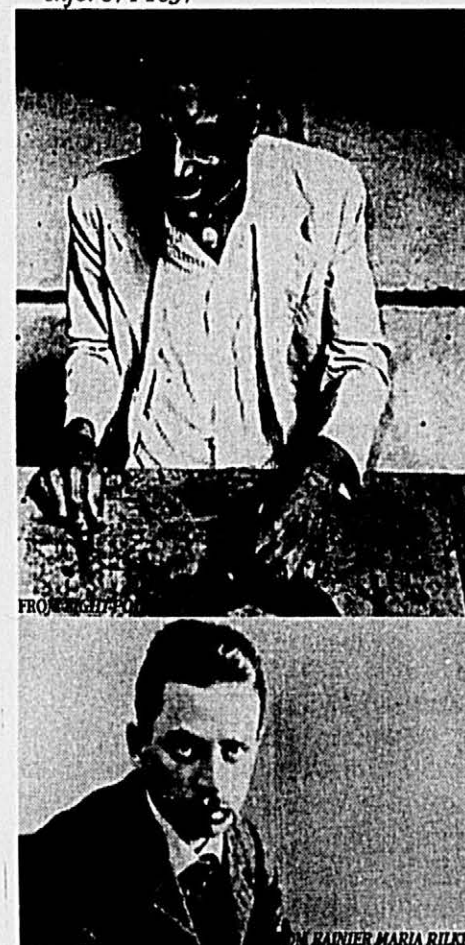
In terms of films spotlighting people of colour, an ethnographic impulse surfaces quite persistently. The film *A Balinese Shadow Play* attempts to render conceivable to Western audiences the poetics of a specifically Indonesian art form. *Through African Eyes* takes up the seemingly irreconcilable debate over whether African art could ever be comfortably positioned within a western conceptual framework. And cross-cultural fascination in general appears to be the topic up for discussion in *Tabu*, *Dernier Voyage*, which documents the life of a Hollywood filmmaker of the 1930s who sought to live and work exclusively in the South Seas.

There are, in addition to these noteworthy efforts, films that succeed at commenting simply and masterfully on the artistic preoccupations of individual non-western artists: *Ousmane Sow* about the Senegalese sculptor and *Lodola*, a film that features the work of dancers José Navas and Chi Long.

The 15th International Festival of Films on Art takes a significant step back from art and media, ironically by drawing closer to them. What a festival of this nature offers spectators is a moment of pause in which to meditate

on the accomplishments of one medium through the apparatus of another, a space in which to relate a world of construction to a world of feeling.

March 11-16. Festival venues: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Cinema ONF, Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Musée d'art Contemporain, Goethe Institute
Info: 874-1637



Over playing the silence

Le Choeur des Silences marks a Montréal playwright's debut

by Mimi Gross

Modern dance fans will love the recently opened show entitled *Le Choeur des silences*. Although the show is actually a play, its fast paced, non-stop combinations of tap dancing and Irish jigs leave the audience gasping for breath. Unfortunately, theatre fans will not be as satisfied. Although the play is graced with some solid performances and clever writing, those elements are soon forgotten as the show loses its way in a clutter of noise, confusion, and pretension.

Le Choeur des Silences, French for "The Chorus of Silences" (yes, the whole play is in French), focuses on a small group of actors who are lamenting the decline of the theatre as an art form. The actors pit their own goals of self-expression and success against the greater forces at work in the theatre world, like the dwindling number of original plays and the decreasing importance of the theatre in society. Faced with the possibility of never achieving the critical and personal success they dreamed of, they contemplate leaving the stage permanently.

All this makes for a fine premise, and the show has promise as long as it sticks to that idea. However, that only lasts about a half hour into the performance, at which point the whole show takes a turn for the worse.

Much of what goes wrong may be attributed to the actors performing a little too convincingly. Aiming to portray nameless, faceless chorus members, they succeed too well and leave very little in the way of any lasting impressions. In one scene, they start criticizing one another for trying to steal the spotlight. Before long they are all yelling incomprehensibly about a variety of other problems.

While this interaction was perhaps intended to convey that artistic rivalry behind the scenes can worsen the quality of the final product on stage, some members of the audience were so confused that it seems they got the point all too well. This overacting, coupled with the fact that all the actors are dressed and made up to look identical, makes for a distracting show that is often hard to follow and distracting.

All this is not to say that the play is completely without merit. While most of the cast members deliver less than spectacular performances, there

are a few notable exceptions. Anne-Sylvie Gosselin shines as Coryphee, the chorus lead. Unremarkable for the first few scenes of the play, she later steals the show as a kidnapping survivor who returns to give a solid and moving oration.

She is not the only cast member to transcend the dreary boundaries of the play. Pascal Contamine and Johans-Karl bring their talents for physical comedy and impeccable timing and delivery to a recurring skit about a pair of friends who must part ways for a time. They are exceedingly funny, while still managing to convey every nuance and irony in their well written lines.

Liik Fleury, in his debut role as playwright, directed and choreographed the play as well. Here he displays a rare gift for words and his script is another of the few stars in the play. At times funny and ironic, at times achingly poetic, his near perfect words survive and surpass the actors who deliver them. The only puzzling aspects of Fleury's text are his rare slips into joul - Quebecois slang. His use of colloquial expressions is too deliberate, and seems out of place in the rest of the play.

That said, there are at least a few good reasons for seeing *Le Choeur des silences*, but

not enough to justify sitting through the whole performance. An excellent script and a handful of outstanding performances help to convey what goes on not behind the curtains of a single play, but ostensibly behind those of the theater world at large. They offer glimpses of a world in bitter conflict, where the actors cannot reconcile their emotional needs with their intellectual ones, where they cannot stop themselves from performing but cannot stop agonizing about it either. Overtures are made by *Le Choeur des silences* to extend those themes, yet it becomes hard not to laugh at all the wrong moments. Add to this the often deafening music and foot stomping, confusing costumes (I had to call the manager of this theater troupe to get the names of the actors mentioned here, and this was only possible after I described their performances to her in detail), and unnecessary overacting, and before long much of the play is spent hoping there will be a good part soon.

Le Choeur des Silences is playing until March 22, at the Monument-National 1182, boulevard Saint-Laurent, tickets: 871-2224

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The Poetry and Science of History and Memory

Anne Michaels Unearths Fugitive Pieces

by Mariko Tamaki

The first novel of Anne Michaels, a Canadian poet whose other works include *The Weight of Oranges* (1986) and *Miner's Pond* (1991),

Fugitive Pieces is what I would hesitantly describe as a masterpiece. There are two reasons that I use the word "hesitantly." First of all, as a fourth year literature student, I am justifiably nervous about imposing any labels on literary works. Secondly, I fear that by using a word such as "masterpiece," a word so over-employed by the entertainment industry (*Braveheart* and *Apollo 13* were both described as masterpieces when they first came out), I risk detracting from my praise of this novel. I can only wish that I could employ the talents of Anne Michaels herself to find the necessary words to describe the impact this novel has had on me.

The story, on a technical level, is about the journey (from Poland to Greece to Toronto) of poet Jakob Beer. He is rescued by Greek scientist and philosopher, Athos Roussos, after his family is slaughtered in World War II.

Fugitive Pieces, is also, in its second half, the story of Ben, an expert on the intersecting fields of weather and biography, based on the theory that weather (sun, snow, and rain) affects not only our day-to-day existence, but our lives as a whole. Though the concept may seem strange, it represents a philosophy within Michael's novel that the fields of science and literature represent different methods of exploring the universe that are not separate but intimately connected. Though Ben only meets Jakob once at a party much later on in Jakob's life, the two men's lives intertwine as Ben uses his study of Jakob's poetry to facilitate his own attempt to reconcile his memories with his present reality.

On many levels, *Fugitive Pieces* is also a novel about history and memory. The opening paragraph to this novel is a testament to both the history — in the form of manuscripts, diaries and letters — that was lost during the war, and the history that remains, buried in the memories of those who survived.

It is fitting, then, that both Jakob and Ben express an interest in natural history and geology, the history of the earth. Michaels draws many ties between the two men's interest in the layers of history found in nature (in rock and in trees) and their engagement in the process of unearthing their memories from the layers of time.

"Everywhere," Ben tells us, "nature remembers. Trees, for example, carry the memory of rainfall. In their rings we read ancient weather storms, sunlight, and temperatures, the growing seasons of centuries. A



forest shares a history, which each tree remembers even after it has been felled."

History, in *Fugitive Pieces*, exists not only in memory, but in even the smallest pieces of the universe.

Perhaps more than any other novel I have read in the past several years, *Fugitive Pieces* gave me a sense of largeness. *Fugitive Pieces*, for me, gives a sense of the universe, of the earth and time and mystery. "The great mystery of wood," Athos is told, "is not that it burns, but that it floats." The mystery of life is not that we remember, but that we can never forget.

Fugitive Pieces is published by McClelland & Stewart Inc. It is currently available in bookstores.

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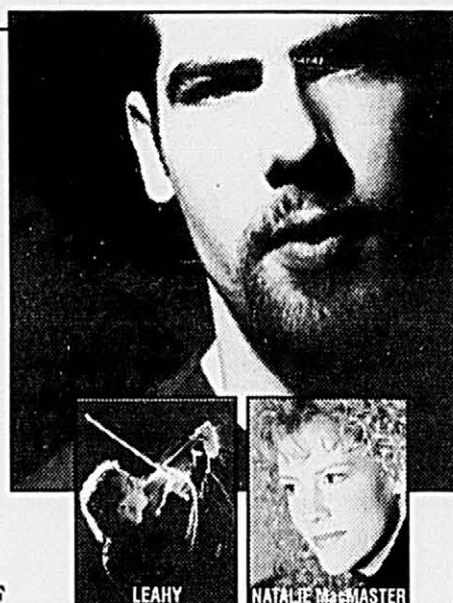
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Subconscious Communications — Paradigm Shift

(Subconscious/Network)

It seems that people tend to marginalize industrial music to the likes of KMFDM or, worse, Nine Inch Nails. They forget the fairly prodigious history of electronic experimentalism behind it. The "Subconscious" label represents the varying output of the ex-members of Skinny Puppy and friends, and this particular sampler should serve as a reminder to the incredibly self-satisfied electronic dance 'movement' that industrial music is more than just a precursor to it.

Posthumous releases from Dwayne Goettel's 1992 solo project, Aduck, anticipate some of the breakbeat and drum & bass that has, in the last few years become so wildly popular. An unreleased (until now) Skinny Puppy track shows the band's penchant to wander into the sticky realm of noise terrorism, while overlaying schizophrenic halting beats and general Puppy chaos.

Other offerings by Download, Doubting Thomas and Tear Garden wander off in their own directions. Despite some minor weaknesses (e.g., the beats sometimes seem less than fresh and the inclusion of the Tear Garden material), this album is a well-rounded example of industrial music that is progressing, rather than stagnating - which is unlike the work of more popular supergroups such as NIN and Ministry.

— Jay McCoy

Soundtrack — Rhyme & Reason

(Priority/Virgin)

Having not seen the movie *Rhyme & Reason*, it is difficult to get a sense of what is trying to be conveyed with the music on the soundtrack. *Rhyme & Reason* — the movie — is supposed to document hip hop history. I'm not sure why or how they chose the artists that appear on the album, but, if it is supposed to be an album that reflects where hip hop is at today, or different trends in hip hop, then it falls short. There are strong elements of hip hop, like women emcees that are missing. Big money performers with West Coast sounds can't represent all that's going on in hip hop today.

But, taking the album as it is, it isn't bad - at all. The whole album is composed of new material, and although some of it seems overproduced, particularly Mack 10 with Tha Dogg Pound, there are some solid performances. Guru's performance with Lil' Dap & Ki-Be is solid, as he once again demonstrates versatility as a rhymers and originality as a writer. But the true

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thunder of the album comes when Busta Rhymes combines with A Tribe Called Quest. For the most part, the music on this album is tremendous.

I can't say I'm sure of what is being said about hip hop based on *Rhyme & Reason's* selection of artists. Having not seen the movie upon which the album is based, it is hard to understand the sense of purpose behind it. But, perhaps I have it wrong. The album was released before the movie. The album has received more press, more hype and more attention than the movie — maybe the movie is based on the album?

— Ahmer Qadeer

Tara MacLean - Silence

(Network/Sony)

Canada has been known as the land of the folk musicians ever since that Neil Young fellow rose to prominence in the popular music scene. New Canuck entry Tara MacLean continues that tradition.

Following the steps of Canadian chanteuses like Sarah McLachlin (but not Alanis Morissette), MacLean follows a more classical, lower tempo approach. Her voice has a soaring quality that is similar to McLachlin's. However, she also has a slightly breathy quality as well. In some songs, her voice lowers to a murmur while her words seem to flutter in and out of the audible range.



MacLean's songs range from gentle ballads to abstract sentiments, like the song "Red," which seems to expose her romantic ideals, but hints at other notions. Of these, a certain religious/spiritual perspective comes forward in her lyrics: "Lord, lead me on/To a world that I can no longer find/My dear you are all the time."

While some may puzzle over the theological connotations of those lines and ones like them, the rest may not find it enticing enough to sustain interest in her classical folk fusion. MacLean's singing talent is undeniable, but her enigmatic songwriting may make this album little more than a sleeping aid.

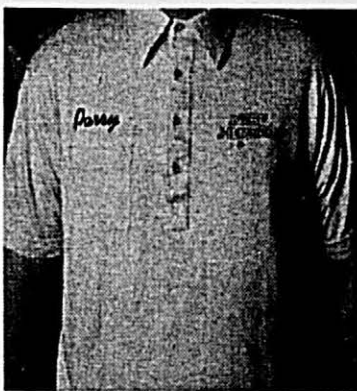
— Mike Cullen

Nerf Herder

(Arista)

Is Nerf Herder yet another band trying to pull off a Weezer? They do have the cheesy golf outfits and dorky faces down to a tee. And their tunes have the tendency to take over the listener's sing-along-reflexes. And the singer sounds like that annoying little kid on the bus that you've always wanted to give a good spanking to. But no, they aren't trying to pull anything off. The album is just plain fun.

After a too brief half hour of freshly squeezed lyrics and painfully funny portraits of failed relationships seen from a reject's point of view, one emerges with an unbearable urge to



buy a packet of Nerds and tell each candy nugget that everything will be all right.

Nerf Herder takes the basic ingredients of today's music scene: a cup of pop, a few tablespoons of punk, and a dash of grunge, tosses in an undiluted ingredient that smells suspiciously like PEZ, chucks it into the mixer and ends up with a fairly respectable first attempt at record-making.

—Kinga Breining

Nerfherder is playing with the Bloodhound Gang (incidentally, crap) on Wednesday, April, 20th, 8pm, \$12.50. Info: 845-2014.

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Cranes swoop into town

Stripping away layers, Cranes are still haunted by old ghosts

by Jameela Jeeroburkhan

When I finally track down Cranes in Philadelphia, the British band's lead singer Alison Shaw tells me a spooky story.

"In Baltimore, we stayed in a really weird hotel," she laughs nervously. "I shouldn't laugh about it because it's not funny at all."

Alison explains that a drunk hotel resident had gone out to purchase cigarettes and had fallen into the elevator shaft. His body was only discovered a week before the band's arrival when the smell began to drift into the hotel lobby.

The incident sets Cranes' North American tour off to a bizarre start, but the band is used to dealing with ghosts from the past. After over 10 years of making music together, the same labels and comparisons haunt them, despite changes to their sound.

Population Four is Cranes' latest album and it's a noticeable break from the heavy production of their past projects.

"We approached the recording in quite a different way this time than in previous albums," explains Alison. "In the past, we've worked in the studio with the drum machine or layered on guitars or added the voice last. But this time we definitely went for a more live feel."

That "live feel" comes across on such songs as "Tangled Up," "Can't Get Free" and "Sweet Unknown," which is all-Alison and perhaps one of the simplest and saddest Cranes songs. "I made that

one up, thanks," she says cheerfully.

Alison's voice has always been a key marker in Cranes' sound. Love it or hate it, its high tone and breathy/childlike qualities define it as an essential instrument in the band. But while that voice



has often faded into songs like another layer of melody, the stripped down sound of *Population Four* brings Alison's vocals onto centre-stage, clearer and sometimes more intelligible than ever.

This new sound results from changes within the band and from the collaboration with producer Mark Freegard (Lush, Manic Street Preachers). After guitarist Matt Cope left the band to marry and move to New Zealand, Cranes did a little shuffle. Drummer, songwriter and brother Jim Shaw took up Cope's place on guitar and Manu Ros became the new drummer.

The not-so-sweet British beat

Although the band has received favourable reviews in England for the few live shows they performed there, UK response to the new album itself has not been as good.

"The British media has always been very divided in their affection to our band," asserts Alison. "Some of them have been very mean and misrepresented us. They aren't willing to figure that we might have moved on, but are still describing us in the way they did about five years ago."

Select Magazine's February review of *Population Four* is a perfect example. Vaunting the faces of Blur and their "revolutionary" new sound on its cover, the magazine describes *Population Four* as an example of how the Cranes are "stuck in the fine-arts ghetto with the Cocteau Twins and other purveyors of pretentiousness."

The same old comparisons bedevil Cranes, thanks to a British press that encourages heated Britpop feuds and hyper-publicized stylistic statements.

"We're definitely not a Britpop band and I probably wouldn't want to be," affirms Alison. "There are other areas of British music, but most of British

media are centred on Britpop. I think, in some ways, people from that whole dance-underground area seem more receptive to what we do than most of the Britpop people. I think there's more of an experimental edge."

But just as the techno/dance (or recently labeled "electronica") scene grows larger

in the UK and in North America, and as many "rockers" dabble with more electronic beats, Cranes have coincidentally moved away from their heavy programming.

"There was definitely a time when we started writing for this record that certain sample sounds we'd used in the past, we wanted to move away from," says Alison. "We just thought, no, this sounds too close to things we've done before or things that are happening around us."

A wide repertoire

An innovative but little-known project (around North America) was the band's 1996 album, *La Tragédie d'Orestre et Electre*, inspired partly by Jean-Paul Sartre's play *The Flies*.

"We didn't really intend to do it," Alison reflects. "It came out of the music that Jim had been writing which had a certain dramatic quality about it," she continues. "I just wondered what I could do with it in terms of vocals. I don't know why, but

I just thought of this French play I had read, like ages ago, in college."

The project soon took on a life of its own. "We got completely absorbed

in it for a few weeks and forgot everything else," she confesses. Alison bought a new copy of the play and recorded lines from it. The band edited the vocals to represent the story.

"So, we have our own little version," she says happily. "I think it's one of our best things really," she adds.

Such a wide repertoire of music makes combining old and new material sometimes difficult for Cranes.

"It does take a while to figure the set out, actually," says Alison. "But I think we've got an okay balance. We play maybe seven or eight new songs and seven or eight old songs."

Although Cranes have fond memories of their last Montréal show in 1995, Alison believes there will be more of a mix of moods this time. "I think there'll be a few different atmospheres," she forecasts.

Still at the beginning of their North American tour, the band experiments when performing the new album. They try out different songs and feed off the response from the crowd.

Fluttering around the Eastern seaboard, it's a busy trip before Cranes touch down in Montréal. My discussion with Alison marks her first "off-night" of the tour.

"We'll try and keep some energy up for you guys," Alison assures with a disarming laugh.

On Monday, March 17, Cranes play Club Soda at 5240 Ave. Du Parc with special guest Rasputina. For more information contact 270-7848.

Crane's Discography

Fuse, 1986; *Self Non-Self*, 1989; *Espero*, 1990; *Wings of Joy*, 1991; *Forever*, 1993; *Loved*, 1994; *La Tragédie d'Orestre et Electre*, 1996; *Population Four*, 1997.



Friday, March 14

• Celebrate the culmination of McGill Pride Week. Local speakers, wine and cheese, UTC, 3521 University St. (at Milton) 19h.

• Galerie Is Art presents "Unusual Suspects...round two" 263 St. Antoine Street West. 20h. Admission \$3.

• Nigeria Action Network and QPIRG present writer and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka on the political situation in Nigeria, Leacock 132, 19h30, Info: 843-2463.

• House of Pride invites you to

"HomeMade Pride," an evening of fashion, glamour and performance hosted by drag superstars including Joffrey Frigid, at Club HOME, 1450 Sainte-Catherine est. Info: 252-4989.

• Folk music at the Yellow Door featuring Daniel Mate. 3625 Aylmer, Admission, \$3, 20h. Info: 398-6243

Saturday, March 15

• Celebrate International Women's Day with The South Asian Women's Community Centre. Centre Lajeunesse, 7378 rue Lajeunesse, (metro Jean Talon) 19h, Info: 328-8812

• The Montréal Record and CD Convention. Ménage Militaire, 3721 Henri-Julien at Ave Des Pins, 10h-16h. Info: 416-282-5477

Sunday, March 16

• Caravane d'amitié Québec-Cuba invites all those opposed to the economic blockade against Cuba to participate in the

annual fundraising dinner in solidarity with the people of Cuba. Buffet Anna Maria, 357, Bellechasse, corner Drolet (metro Beaubien or Rosemont) Admission: \$20. 12h30, Info: 398-8318

Ongoing

• The Montréal Sexual Assault Centre seeks volunteers to work on the telephone crisis line. Info: 934-4504 or 934-0505 ext. 452.

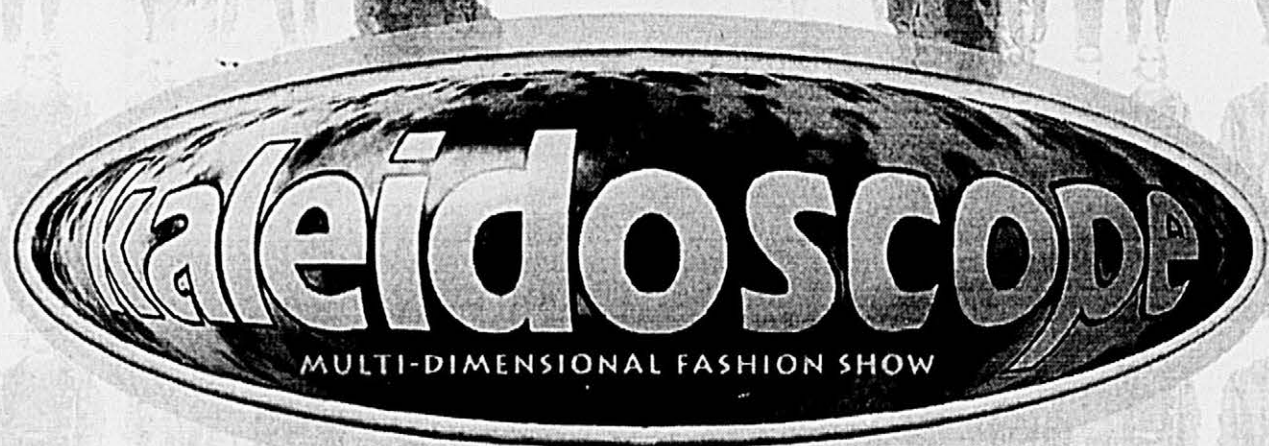
• The McGill Women's Union offers an informal peer facilitated post abortion support group. No counselors present. Time to be arranged based on interest. Info: Terri at 398-6823.

• PROCEID seeks volunteers interested in working with people with intellectual disabilities. Info: Stephanie Torchin, 737-7973.

• McGill University Photographic Society is holding "photo contest 97." Deadline for submissions is March 15. Info: 398-6786 or visit Shatner B-06.



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